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MEMORANDUM

TO: Daniel Amstutz
Senior Transportation Planner

FROM: Marie A. Krepelka
Board Administrator

DATE: July 20, 2021

RE: Traffic and Pedestrian Safety Concerns on Eastern Avenue

The Select Board at the meeting of July 19 referred the attached correspondence to the Transportation Advisory Committee.

Thank you.

MAK:lc

July 14, 2021

Town of Arlington Select Board
730 Mass Ave.
Arlington, MA 02476

RE: Traffic and Pedestrian Safety Concerns on Eastern Avenue (near Robbins Farm Park and Brackett Elementary School)

Dear Select Board Members,

First, I would like to thank you for your willingness to serve the residents of Arlington, including my family. We were fortunate to find our home on Glenburn Road almost 10 years ago. We have two young, very active boys who have/will attend Brackett Elementary School. Over the years, we have spent a lot of time at the Brackett school playground and Robbins Farm Park, walking up and down the sidewalks lining Eastern Avenue and going across the oftentimes busy street. Although we love the great playground spaces, my husband and I (and many of our neighbors) feel incredibly anxious whenever our children are near or crossing this street.

Traffic on Eastern Avenue seems to have increased over the years, likely related to the influx of families with small children moving to the neighborhood, more sporting events/practices being held in the recently renovated Robbins Farm fields, and the increased use of ride-shares, home deliveries, and other service provider vehicles. Far too often, we witness drivers who seem unaware of the need for extreme caution on this street, especially driving downhill and when cars are parked on the sides of the street.

A few months ago, I reached out to Adam Chapdelaine regarding my pedestrian safety concerns and he connected me with Daniel Amstutz, Senior Transportation Planner. Daniel graciously met with me at Robbins Farm Park on a Brackett Elementary School "early release" day; this gave us the opportunity to watch a dismissal - one of the busiest times of day on Eastern Avenue. After the meeting, Daniel emailed me a summary of my concerns and his observations; refer below for an excerpt from his email dated June 23, 2021:

I'm following up to summarize what we discussed and next steps for analyzing or working to address the concerns you raised. This is what I heard:

- *Concerns about pedestrian safety at crosswalk between Robbins Farm Park and Brackett Elementary.*
- *Lack of pedestrian crossing further up Eastern Ave near the ballfield portion of the park (i.e. across from Bellington Street).*
- *Concerns that drivers are going too fast downhill (eastbound) on Eastern Ave, and sometimes uphill (westbound). (Speed limit on Eastern Ave is 25 mph, although does not appear to be signed where it starts at Park Circle.)*
- *Advance warning signage for the Brackett crosswalk going eastbound is not placed appropriately.*
- *Flashing school zone speed limit sign going eastbound is either not working and/or is blocked by street tree branches on the approach, such that drivers do not notice it. The signs also do not flash on early release days.*
- *High levels of on-street parking that narrow the street and reduce visibility for pedestrians.*

Some additional observations I made:

- *The westbound school zone sign also does not flash during early release day (Wednesday).*
- *Going westbound/up the hill on Eastern Ave, there are no advance warning signs for the Brackett crosswalk.*
- *General bad parking behavior of drivers (parents) during dismissal, including parking too close to intersections. There also seemed to be a fair amount of darting across the street between parked cars. On the positive side, respect given to the traffic supervisor (crossing guard) at the Brackett crosswalk. Large numbers of kids crossing and in the plaza in front of the school.*
- *Some bicycle traffic, including parents picking up kids in cargo bikes, but no bike accommodations on Eastern Ave.*

In his email, Daniel also noted that he planned to address certain immediate needs with the Police Department and DPW (i.e. flashing school sign issues and potentially adding some signage). For the larger traffic/pedestrian safety concerns, he suggested I submit a request to the Select Board to refer this to the Transportation Advisory Council for a study. As such, I would like this letter to serve as my formal request for this to be done.

To further support my request for a traffic study and to guide any future work to be done, please consider the following:

- The town had assessments of all of the playgrounds done back in 2019 (by Nancy White of Playground Inspections of New England) and in the report submitted to the Park and Recreation Commission on 11/30/2019, she noted the following regarding Robbins Farm: *"The street is very busy and there is a school playground across the street from Robbins Farm. This park is both an anchor park and a destination park. The approach is good throughout the playground, but there is heavy traffic with cars moving fast, and crossing the street is challenging. When Robbins is restored, there will be traffic concerns. Consider a traffic study."*
- In an ADA Self Evaluation Report done back in 2014, there are some ADA issues/recommendations noted related to crossing Eastern Avenue, which I am not sure have been addressed or if other issues were noted in subsequent reports.
- Assistance with the study, design, and costs of improvements that affect the safety of Brackett Elementary students may be available to the town through the Safe Routes to School program.
- Robbins Farm Park is used by Brackett Elementary School throughout the day for PE, recess, and some after school activities, as such, these students are crossing Eastern Avenue during times other than at arrival/dismissal. Considering this, it may be best to lower the speed limit altogether on this street and/or leave the flashing signs on during park hours.
- Friends of mine who live on/near Eastern have suggestions including restricting on-street parking to one side of the street and/or installing speed bumps (in particular, near the corner of Fayette Street and Eastern to force drivers headed downhill toward the school to slow down).

Thank you in advance for your consideration. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or if I can help in any way.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Trinkle
83 Glenburn Road
Arlington, MA 02476